The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news comments and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor concerning in the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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WHOLE NO. 1697 — WILLIAM GREEN, President — WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1943 — GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer — VOL. 33, NO. 42

FACING *the* FACTS

With PHILIP PEARL

One of the most constructive achievements of the 63rd annual convention of the AFL is the fact that the American press and public now at last recognize and accept the true strength of the Federation.

With a total of 6,564,141 dues-paid members now in the fold and with prospects bright for an increase to over eight million by the end of next year, there can no longer be any doubt in anyone's mind that the American Federation of Labor is veritably the "House of Labor" in America.

For a long while the CIO claimed equality of membership with the AFL and, in fact, was accorded equality of treatment in many unofficial and even official circles. That false and unfair assumption of parity can no longer be maintained or sustained.

For it is obvious now that the AFL is supreme in the field of organized labor in this country, that the CIO has taken a back seat, that the time is not far off when many of the constituent unions of the CIO may knock on our door for admission.

The Way To Unity

There, it seems to us, lies the best opportunity of a decade for real labor unity in America. The method of direct negotiation with the CIO has failed and there appears to be little hope of success in the near future. The weakness of the CIO and the fact that it is split by rivalry and ill-feeling between its Communist-controlled and anti-Communist affiliates constitute serious obstacles to labor peace—obstacles from the CIO point of view. They know their bargaining position is at a low point.

Yet these very conditions should, in our opinion, serve to encourage some of the better-constituted and progressive CIO unions to seek a separate peace with the AFL through the medium of re-affiliation.

No one wants to be on the losing side. And the plain fact is that the CIO, which was formed to destroy the AFL and replace it as the dominant labor organization in America, has lost that fight and lost it ingloriously.

Besides there are other large union organizations, not now affiliated with either the AFL or the CIO, which now actively seek to come back into the American Federation of Labor.

Chief among these are the United Mine Workers of America and the International Typographical Union. The chances are that both of these organizations will become affiliated with the AFL before another year has passed. This will establish an irresistible trend toward real labor unity that will not be denied.

The Need For Unity

For the members of organized labor, as well as its leaders realize now more keenly than ever before that a united labor movement is indispensable to the immediate welfare and future security of the workers of our country.

Never before since organized labor established itself firmly in the institutional life of the nation has the trade union movement taken a more terrible beating in the press, on the radio and in public opinion than in the past few years. Never before have the economic, social and political interests of the workers been threatened so seriously by Federal and State anti-labor legislation.

And this, of course, may be only the beginning. The dangers are bound to increase if the end of the war brings about a post-war depression. No union will be safe in a time like that unless all are united in a single, powerful Federation which can present a united and invincible front against labor's enemies.

Let labor take heed and let it be forearmed for the emergency.

The 63rd annual convention of the AFL, just ended, showed the way. The Federation, stronger than at any previous time in history, opened its arms and invited all union organizations to come back home. There is no time to be lost. The devil may take the hindmost.

AFL Hits Bureaucracy And Compulsion of Labor; Green, Meany, Council Re-Elected Unanimously

Vinson Rapped In Rail Wage Case

Boston—Responsibility for the mounting railway labor crisis was laid squarely at the door of Economic Stabilization Director Vinson by George Harrison, President of the Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, in an impassioned address before the AFL convention here.

Harrison charged that Vinson, with one stroke of a pen, had vetoed a pay increase of 8 cents an hour for railroad workers which was awarded by a Presidential Commission.

This award, Harrison explained, was made after extensive hearings in a case which has now lasted 13 months. He asserted that Vinson had not read a single page of the testimony and had not examined a scintilla of the evidence which the unions presented at a cost of over $100,000.

Emphasizing the gross inequities suffered by railroad workers whose wages are 21 cents an hour below other industrial workers, and pointing out these inequities have resulted in a 40 per cent turnover in railroad employment in the past year, Harrison continued:

"We can't go on. We can't operate the nation's railroads with school children, with Mexican nationals who know nothing of our operations and with prisoners of war.

"Our situation is desperate. We are on the verge of the most chaotic condition in railroad transportation. Our people are demanding that we put out a strike ballot. We are conscious of our national responsibilities. We shall do nothing that will in any way obstruct the nation's war effort. But we cry out loudly against those methods that we resist on the battlefronts. We ask for the democratic process. We are suffering from one of the most arbitrary and capricious acts that has ever been perpetrated against the property of patriotic and loyal citizens in a most vital industrial operation of the nation in time of war."

As the applause subsided, President William Green responded with further condemnation of Vinson's action and added:

"I will say to George Harrison and those he represents that whatever they decide to do in the way of righting injustice shall have the support, the American Federation of Labor will stand with them and support them."

Secretary-Treasurer George Meany also assailed Economic Stabilization Director Vinson for his persistent interference with the orderly operations of the War Labor Board. He declared:

"It causes us to wonder at times just whose team he is playing on when he denies the action of a governmental agency concerned with war production.

"The present procedure under which the War Labor Board operates with Government control by these various agencies to me represents a complete violation of the agreement we made in December of 1941. We bargained for a Board which would settle these disputes under the democratic process of majority rule, upon the merits of each particular case. We haven't such a Board today."

Earlier in the convention, Daniel J. Tobin, head of the Teamsters Union, also assailed unjust delays and decisions by bureaucrats in wage cases.

Broader Public Relations Program, Aid To Labor Press, Voted By AFL

Boston.—Enlargement of the public relation activities of the AFL and the extension of further aid to the Labor Press were voted unanimously at the 63rd annual convention here.

The delegates rejected proposals for a separate public relations department but recommended that the Executive Council set aside an appropriation for the finance of such a program. The committee report adopted by the convention said:

"We would call attention to the splendid work having been and now being carried on, not alone by the Federation but as well by several of its departments and a number of our national and international unions. It is evident good use has been made of every available opportunity presented through the press, the public forum, the radio, screen and other means of communication in presenting organized labor's constructive efforts to the community and to the nation, to industry and our national economy, part and parcel, and in meeting unjustified and unwarranted criticism and attack designed to bring our movement in a period of unfavorable light.

"Better well may have been our past activities in this direction, there is room for improvement and enlargement of many activities. To that end we recommend, first of all, that the officers of the Federation make every possible effort to give all activities of this character of the several departments, and of our national and international unions, coordinated with the activities of the Federation.

"We further recommend that the executive officers, or a committee appointed for this purpose, consider how these public-relations activities may be furthered and effectively enlarged, and that it likewise consider what sum or sums aside of an appropriate sum of money out of the Federation's funds and income may be set aside annually for this purpose, and that in the event it is not essential or desirable to further enlarge such a fund for the purpose indicated, that the national and international unions be solicited for such voluntary financial contributions as will enable the Federation to engage in an effective and comprehensive public relations campaign.

"Your committee heartily concurs with the conclusions of the Executive Council that the 'Labor For Victory' radio programs of the American Federation of Labor have been of great value in informing the public of labor's great contributions to the war effort.

"We recommend that this convention formally express the wholehearted appreciation of the American Federation of Labor to the National Broadcasting Company for making this radio time on its nationwide network facilities available to the American Federation of Labor without charge as a public service.

"Your committee is indeed pleased by the fact that President Green has appointed an outstanding committee to study ways and means by which the American Federation of Labor can be of greater service and assistance to the bona fide labor press which upholds its policies. This action was taken in conformity with the instructions of the 1942 convention at Toronto. The personnel of the new committee, composed of Vice President Matthew Woll, President F. E. Millinan of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employes, and Secretary-Treasurer Joseph Padway of the International Labor Press, guarantees that its recommendations will be of practical and constructive benefit to the bona fide labor press.

"Your committee understands that a progress has been made by the Special Committee on the Labor Press and that it proposes to submit a report to the next meeting of the Executive Council.

"The bona fide labor press has been of such great service to the labor movement in the past year that your committee feels the American Federation of Labor should make every effort to provide wider opportunities for its growth and development."

AFL State And City Bodies Plan National Post-War Housing Program

Boston—Labor representatives of forty state federations and of many communities in all parts of the country formulated a program of local post-war housing and community development of post-war housing planned and prepared in advance. Under Council, Trades and Labor Councils, of Tampa, Florida, Secretary G. Bates, vice-president of the American Federation of Labor and head of the Housing Committee, reported that the meeting received numerous first hand reports on housing conditions in war housing centers and has compiled first hand evidence on many situations where lack of adequate housing leads to overcrowding, endangering war workers' health and productivity and necessitates commuting for as much as forty and sixty miles each day. It was decided to initiate formal surveys of each situation and to submit findings to Congress and to the National Housing Agency which has neglected the housing need of war plant employees in numerous instances.

The post-war housing program recommended by the Housing Committee was approved by the Boston meeting by the delegates and an agreement was reached to expand the Federation's housing activities in view of its vital importance to all wage earners and to soldiers demobilized when the war is won. Speakers who included Miss Catherine Bauer, a well known housing expert and author of "Modern Housing" and F. Cerculi, former chairman of the Massachusetts State Housing Commission, and John Ferrety of the Federal Public Housing Authority in Washington.

Officers Pledge War Support And Protection of All Workers' Interests

Boston — William Green was re-elected President of the American Federation of Labor by acclamation for his twentieth consecutive term on the closing day of the 63rd annual convention.

At the same time, George Meany was unanimously elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Federation. He has served in that capacity since 1939.

The following Vice Presidents, who serve on the Executive Council along with Mr. Green and Mr. Meany, were also re-elected without opposition:

William L. Hutcheson, Matthew Woll, Joseph N. Weber, G. M. Bugniazet, George M. Harrison, Daniel J. Tobin, Harry C. Bates, W. D. Mahon, Felix H. Knight, Edward Flore, Harry W. Brown, William C. Birthright and William C. Doherty.

In his acceptance speech, President Green predicted that 1944 would be a "fateful year" in the history of America and the labor movement. He pledged that labor will measure up to all requirements in the war effort. He emphasized that political unions of "great import to the working people of our country" will have to be made. Finally, he urged the unions to all present in the AFL to come into the fold and promised a vigorous drive to organize the unorganized.

Mr. Meany told the convention:

"We have come a long way in this war but we still have a long way to go and this American Federation of Labor must continue to give its vital support on the production lines and bring about victory. That is our first job. Our second job is to protect the interests of our members and the working people of this nation while victory is being accomplished."

AFL LEADERS TO VISIT FORT KNOX OCT. 25-26

Washington, D. C. — American Federation of Labor leaders will get a first-hand view of the Army's need for trained technicians at Fort Knox, Ky., October 25 and 26. The AFL party, headed by President William Green and Secretary-Treasurer George Meany, will be guests of the Army during the two-day visit.

The trip is intended to show the importance of pre-induction training in bringing into the armed services men who possess the special and mechanical skills a modern Army requires. Union leaders have been cooperating with the Army in encouraging enrollment in pre-induction training courses for men who expect to be called into service.

At Fort Knox the AFL delegation will ride in tanks and other types of armored vehicles and will watch the machine shops and schools in which thousands of Army technicians are undertaking and perfecting all the many different kinds of equipment used by our mobile forces.

AFL CONVENTION LAUDED BY BOSTON NEWSPAPER

Boston—A warm tribute to the 63rd AFL convention came from an unexpected source—the staid and conservative editorial columns of the Boston Post. This newspaper said:

"As the American Federation of Labor's national convention here draws to a close, the impression it has conceived can look back with a real sense of satisfaction on their meeting. The spirit of unity and the hand-in-hand with peace-time convention is the keynote of this convention. The delegates have been deadly serious in their work.

"The Federation's convention has been a long one. It has brought out some serious discussions. These have ranged from one front to another, but many divergent views expressed at no time has the dignity of labor been affronted. Boston can take real pride in playing host to such a fine convention."

64TH AFL CONVENTION TO MEET IN NEW ORLEANS

Boston—The 64th annual convention of the AFL will open in New Orleans on Nov. 30, 1944. This was decided by the executive committee at the closing gates of the convention just ended here.

Delegate Quarles, of the New Orleans Central Labor Council, promised that the AFL representatives "will be royally treated when they come down to the most interesting city in the South." Delegate Quarles, who attended the 1940 AFL convention there needed no such reassurances.

BLOOD TESTS ENDORSED BY AFL CONVENTION

Boston—The AFL convention asked all unions to urge their members to take advantage of existing health protection facilities for blood tests and physical examinations to help the nationwide drive to eliminate venereal disease.

However, the convention was forced to reject a proposal for compulsory examinations because the AFL does not have such power over any except its affiliated, autonomous units.

Many War And Post-War Labor Problems Decided As Sessions End

Boston.—The American Federation of Labor put bureaucracy on the spot as its 63rd annual convention adjourned sine die.

The delegates slammed the daylights out of labor conscription, Government by edict and other forms of labor compulsion which they denounced as the worst obstructions to utmost war production.

At the same time the convention gave its unanimous and wholehearted approval to every constructive proposal for speeding victory in the war and for guaranteeing victory at the peace tables.

Certain that the knowledge that the American Federation of Labor is now at its peak strength in history and freely predicting a total membership of eight million in 1944, the delegates marched out of Boston confidently determined to carry out the decisions of the convention to the best of their ability.

Outstanding among the decisions taken in the closing days of the convention were:

VICTORY—"We have pledged ourselves to contribute all of our resources and capabilities to the winning of the war. Let us now solemnly pledge ourselves, while so doing, to use every energy we possess to protect the wage earners of our country from these twin evils—compulsory control of labor by the Government and government through discretionary authority."

POST-WAR—Creation of an Inter-Departmental Government Council to correlate all post-war planning; establishment of a Federal agency to clear cancellation of war contracts and to speed the conversion to peace-time planning; creation of another agency to dispose of surplus plant facilities, materials and lands acquired for war purposes; expansion of AFL's own post-war planning program; return to 40 hour week after war without reduction in take-home pay; post-war housing program to provide jobs and decent homes; extension and enrichment of "good neighbor" policy to Latin America; immediate declaration of a definite foreign policy by Congress and world security organization to keep the peace, buttressed by "understandings" among democratic nations; full support for self-rehabilitation and self-readaption in conquered countries.

UNITED MINE WORKERS—Convention welcomed the bid of this union for re-affiliation but delegated final action to the Executive Council with instructions to resolve jurisdictional conflicts of UMW with existing AFL affiliates before issuing charter.

WAR LABOR BOARD—Denounced edicts by Economic Stabilization Director Vinson vetoing WLB decisions, urged the President to restore WLB's former power to adjudicate disputes finally by democratic processes and refused to countenance perpetuation of WLB setup after war ends.

NO-STRIKE PLEDGE—Reaffirmed unanimously.

MANPOWER—Hit proposals for National Service Act; insisted on retention of voluntary, decentralized administration; urged creation of labor commission to safeguard working and living conditions of workers in war industry and war centers; warned against privatization of war or on vital war projects and demanded elimination of manpower waste through labor-management cooperation.

PRICE CONTROL—Charged failure of OPA to redress living costs, criticized cost of living index of Bureau of Labor Statistics, urged greater attention to proper nutrition of workers, insisted on labor representation on the stabilization boards and demanded creation of women's auxiliaries to aid in price control and rationing programs.

RENT CONTROL—Urged central labor unions to make community surveys as rent costs for use in protecting wage earners against exorbitant income.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS—Welcomed collaboration with British Trade Union Congress, rejected proposal for similar direct tie-up with Soviet trade unions which are Government-dominated and denounced American Communists who espouse Russian policies to the detriment of American interests.

LEGISLATION—Called on Congress for immediate repeal of Connally-Smith Act, asked adoption of Wagner-Murray-Dingell Social Security amendments, castigated State anti-labor legislation now being tested in the courts.

NATIONAL WAR FUND—Appealed to AFL unions to support this great humanitarian drive to raise funds for war relief in which the AFL's own Labor League for Human Rights is actively participating.

EDUCATION—Decried spread of child labor in war industry, urged adequate safeguards for youth and called for full-time education, supported constructive youth training and apprenticeship programs.

CIO—Voted to continue AFL Unity Committee so that "no opportunity to establish unity may be overlooked."

AFL Scores Ban On Jobs For Negroes, Pledges Drive To Remove Prejudice

Boston.—The American Federation of Labor, by unanimous convention action, pledged itself to do everything in its power to eliminate prejudice against Negroes in industry.

This goal, the convention held, cannot be achieved by decrees, threats or force from on high. It requires intelligent, systematic educational efforts to wipe out prejudice and to remove handicaps suffered by workers because of their race, creed or color. For this reason, the convention directed that its progressive and forward-looking declaration be given the widest possible publicity. It follows:

"The founders of the American Federation of Labor since their inception were opposed to any prejudices, traditions, social or religious demarcations which could be applied to interfere with, or prevent thoroughgoing organization of all wage earners. They made one of the cornerstones of the great trade union structure they were determined to erect—the principle that the right to work, or membership in a trade union should not be limited, or restricted in any manner, because of creed, color or race.

"The American Federation of Labor at that time, and ever since, has been the principal constructive and influential force in our country in giving practical application to that basic principle. We can examine the record of progress made in eliminating prejudice and establishing economic security, with gratification and sincere pride.

"The principle announced over sixty years ago has been given increasing practical application. Distinctions, because of national origin within our trade union movement, have been very largely eliminated. The color bar has been removed to such an extent that labor representatives of our colored members inform us that over half a million of their race are nowdues paying members of the American Federation of Labor. This is the largest organization of colored workers in the world.

"It is evident however, that in some portions of our country there still remain among workers lingering suspicions, prejudices and traditions fostered by conditions long since passed, but which still operate to prevent the complete application of that great principle upon which our trade union structure has been erected.

"The war in which our country is now engaged, which involves safeguarding the vital principle of free institutions under government by law, enacted by the people' representatives for the people, demands that national unity must be had and that all prejudices which hamper that unity with this unity must be eliminated.

"Those in our armed forces are risking their lives in our country's defense, without thought of national origin, race or color. Nature has given them. All of them are the nation's defenders. When the war ends those who are wage earners must be free to return to peaceful occupations as equals in the enjoyment of all of the rights and opportunities enjoyed by others in our trade union movement.

"National origin, race or color must in no manner or form restrict any American from a free opportunity to make for himself or herself a skilled mechanic, a craftsman, and take his place as such in any employment he desires, the skill which he has acquired. The doors of our trade union movement must be open. This country must not maintain an industrial standard which discriminates against a wage earner because of his color.

"Substantial progress has been made in eliminating prejudices, but there still remains an obligation upon the American Federation of Labor to carry on and expand the good work it has already done, so that the principle of industrial equality of all men will be established beyond question in every section of our country.

"It is obvious that the goal we aim for, the best interests of the American people as a whole, and our democratic way of life, cannot be secured through forcing such a method of decrees, mechanical orders or threats handed down from on high. What is required is intelligent, systematic, educational efforts to speed the day when there will no longer exist any industrial field any prejudices or handicaps because of racial origin or color.

"We feel that reality and action can be given to this declaration of principle and of policy, your committee recommends that these declarations be given the widest possible publicity, and that all of the educational facilities of our trade union movement be used in furthering the objectives which have been herein set forth.

"Your committee recommends affirmation of the action taken by the Executive Council at Toronto in President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices.

"The Post War Problems Committee of the AFL has appointed a subcommittee to deal with this and other matters referred to it. This subcommittee the minority groups, including the colored race, are represented and your committee is confident that as the results of this committee's work definite progress will be made."

U. S. Labor "Champs" Of The World, Sen. Mead Tells Boston Convention

Boston—American workers and their unions are world champions, just as the New York Yankees are in baseball, Sen. James Mead of New York told the AFL convention here in his address to a world hour of labor battlefronts with a group of other Senators.

Cool in production, top in loyalty and supreme in reducing time lost through strikes was Sen. Mead's description of U. S. labor's war time record. He branded as false propaganda charges by anti-labor spokesmen that the workers of America have failed to back up the boys on the fighting fronts. He said:

"Our production is the world's best. Compared with any other country in the world, speed or fee, in the quality or quantity of our goods we lead and all others follow. That has been proved by our friends, if you will just look at the record.

"Our equipment is on every allied front in the world. That is being shipped on every ocean, into nations that are joining with us in this gigantic struggle for freedom and world human decency. Every nation and every army in the world, fighting on our teams, has American equipment and American goods to sustain them in battle.

"In answer to the critics of American labor is that we are doing our bit, that we are excelling even the fondest hopes of our friends.

"They talk about strikes. I inquired the other day of strikes in the countries through which we have and from the representatives I met from other countries. Unfortunately, where labor is free you will hear of an occasional strike. But when they do, they are settled again quickly and fine, so I find in a report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that in the entire year of 1942, the first full year after labor gave its no-strike pledge, strikes in America only represented 6 tenths of one percent, and even the common cold or the enforced absence as the result of a punctured tire or breakdown of a car has far exceeded the loss resulting from strikes in this country. I want to commend the American Federation of Labor and your leader for the splendid cooperation you have given to the government.

"Although it is unfortunate that we have a world hour of fighting this war on our side, the fact that we have reduced them to an all-time low is complimentary to your leadership and of your loyalty and of your pledge. We found mistakes, but mistakes incidents happening here and there throughout our investigation. The Truman Committee, in its effort to investigate and prevent, over a period of years, found industrialists at fault, found the quality of the Army suffering, found the Army itself reasons for setting up court martial proceedings. It all brings out the fact that we are human and that occasionally humans err, and when I talk to you about errors, unfortunately errors do occur in every human family and in every walk of life. We have been human in the ranks of labor in making mistakes, but when I say to you that the findings of our committee have shown that even in the industrial and financial leadership of the country, they have made mistakes of which I add to that record in the ranks of the military mistakes have been made and court martial proceedings have been warranted, then I say that so far as we are concerned our mistakes have been insignificant when they be comparison with any other nation on earth, and we ought to be proud of the fact that we rate the standing of champions.

"Talking about champions I am reminded of the fact that the New York Yankees won at St. Louis a few days ago. They are champions; they have a right to proclaim that they are the greatest aggregation of baseball players in all the world, and they have the tangible evidence in the pennant that will fly proudly over Yankee Stadium. And yet if you look at their box scores you will find they made some errors, too."